



The Johnson Letter

From the desk of
Michigan State Senator
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Dear Friend:

The Fiscal Year 2006-2007 budget process is underway. I would like to take this opportunity to bring you up to speed on the current budget situation.

As you know, the state continues to face tough economic times. Our unemployment rate is still amongst the highest in the nation, and with the recent announcements of the auto industry closings, things are only looking worse. Therefore, I am sure you are not surprised to learn that this budget will again be full of difficult decisions as the state faces yet another general fund deficit.

In order to make Michigan strong again, there are simply some things that we cannot sacrifice in the 2006-2007 budget. We must ensure that we have a budget in place that will strengthen our economy and protect Michigan's families. Last year the legislature was able to securitize \$1 billion for the 21st Century Job's Plan. This plan will diversify Michigan's economy while bringing much needed higher paying jobs to the state.

A large part of securing Michigan's future requires an educated workforce. While the auto industry has treated our state great in the past, we must realize that we cannot rely on one type of job to restore Michigan's position as a prosperous state. Better jobs require a more skilled and educated workforce. Improving Michigan's K-12 education system is essential in preparing students for future job positions in the new economy. Thankfully, one of the brighter parts of the budget is school-aid, which so far has seen an increase in funding. It is my hope to increase the foundation allowance in order to give students more of the resources they need.

It is also evident that a college education is important to succeed in the global economy. Michigan has been working to promote higher education by offering students who do well on a standardized test a scholarship, the Michigan Merit Award. This award has been in place for six years and has already helped nearly 300,000 students alleviate some of the financial burden of attending college. Making a college education accesible to those who can least afford it is one of my top priorities as I move forward with this budget.

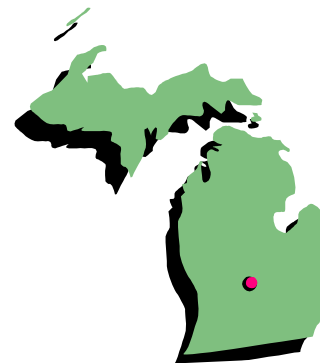
While I know that the Fiscal Year 2006-2007 budget will be difficult, I look forward to steering Michigan in the right direction. As always, I will work to strengthen Michigan's economy, protect Michigan's families, and pass a balanced and responsible budget. I will also do my best to keep you updated as we move forward with the budget process.

Sincerely,

Shirley Johnson

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2005 Legislative Accomplishments

Last year was very busy for the legislature. Read on for a summary of some of the legislature's accomplishments in 2005.

Economic diversification: The securitization of the state's tobacco settlement money will provide a billion dollars for investments in Michigan's future by helping to spur economic diversification throughout the state.

Telecommunications Rewrite: The Telecommunications Act was rewritten based on a sunset put in place several years ago. Under the

new Telecommunications Act, consumers are ensured access to reasonably priced basic phone service.



Student Safety Initiative: These new laws prohibit convicted sex offenders from working in schools or day-care centers. Background checks also are required for all school employees.

Violent Video Games: New laws make it a crime to sell ultra-violent or sexually explicit games to children.

Direct Shipment of Wine: The legislature sent the governor legislation that would permit both in-state and out-of-state wineries to directly ship up to 1,500 cases of wine annually to consumers. Safety provisions are in place to protect minors.



Mobile-Phone Numbers Protected Under Senate Bill

Legislation being considered by the Senate would give Michigan residents greater protection in keeping their mobile-phone contact information private. Senate Bill 127 would require that mobile-



phone service providers receive written consent from their subscribers before listing them in a nationwide directory. Major mobile-phone service providers have discussed creating a directory of the more than 180 million cell-phone users. Consumers have complained about creating such a directory be-

cause they don't want their numbers published and potentially used for telemarketing. Unknowingly, some mobile-phone users have consented to have their numbers included in a directory because their contracts include fine print that would include their number.

Background Checks Required for Residential Care Employees

Legislation designed to protect senior citizens and vulnerable individuals in residential care facilities has been sent to the governor. The two-bill package would require residential care facilities to conduct criminal background checks on all potential employees, as well as obtain fingerprints on all current employees. Senate Bills 621 and 622 would restrict the individuals who have regular direct access or provide direct services to patients or adult foster care facility residents.

Under SB 622 an individual cannot work, independently contract or be granted clinical privileges in an adult foster care facility if convicted of a violent felony, unless 15 years have lapsed since all terms and conditions of the sentence, parole and probation were completed. Employing individuals convicted of certain violent misdemeanors within the past 10 years



would also be prohibited. Other offenses are also prohibited for various periods. SB 621 would essentially do the same for health care facilities or agencies, including nursing homes, county medical care facilities, hospices, hospitals that provide swing bed services, homes for the aged and home health agencies. The bills also establish penalties for licensees, owners, administrators or operators of a health facility that knowingly and willfully fails to conduct criminal history checks.



Senate Votes To Make School Buses Safer

Legislation to help ensure student school buses. The bill would: re-visibility guide-safety on school buses was passed quire school bus drivers to be in lines for bus by the Senate recently. Senate Bill compliance with federal drug and stops to ensure 932 would update the Pupil Trans- alcohol testing; require slip resistant students can portation Act to comply with fed- material for aisles and stairwells; and board the bus in eral regulations for school buses and require conformance with federal a safe environ- school bus drivers and to conform regulations for windshield wipers ment. to developments regarding con- and washers, mirrors and lights on construction of and equipment on school buses. The bill also adds clear



Spotlight On State Representative Shelley Taub

House Bill 5054, sponsored by should not have State Rep. Shelley Taub, was signed to worry about into law by Governor Jennifer legal action," said Granholm on December 29, 2005. T a u b , R - House Bill 5054 exempts from legal Bloomfield Hills. action doctors and nurses who re- "Doctors, nurses spond and volunteer with govern- and EMT's that ment organizations for search, res- volunteer to cue or recovery operations during work with the or after natural or manmade disas- government to ters. "People that are working hard help people during local emergency to save lives in extreme conditions events, including missing persons, needed to be fixed."



plane crashes or building collapses, should not have to worry about incurring legal costs. These include people working with organizations like Michigan Urban Search and Rescue. People need to be exempt during state or local disasters as they are already covered under federal law if the situation is declared a federal disaster area. This was a federal disaster area. This was a loophole in the current law that needed to be fixed."

Michigan Taxpayer's Guide Now Available



The 2006 Michigan Taxpayer's Guide (for tax year 2005) is now available. This free guide includes most forms needed for filing and contains information on the Michigan Property Tax, the Michigan Income Tax and the Single Business Tax. Contact Senator Johnson's office now to request your free copy.

Questions or Comments?

Contact Senator Shirley Johnson

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